

Message Text

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43

ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4960

INFO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

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AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SF, AO, US, PFOR

SUBJ: NP BACKBENCHER CLAIMS U.S. ENCOURAGED ANGOLAN
INVQVEMENT

REF: CAPE TOWN 0162 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: PUBLIC SPEECH BY NATIONALIST BACKBENCHER
HIGHLIGHTS WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT US ENCOURAGED SOUTH AFRICA
TO BECOME INVOLVED IN ANGOLA. USE OF UNCONFIRMED PRESS
REPORTS APPARENTLY DETAILING EVENTS RELATED TO SAG ACTIONS
IN ANGOLA BROUGHT SHARP REACTION FROM PLITICIANS AND
DENIALS FROM SAG OFFICIALS. RECOMMEND DEPARTMENT ISSUE
STATEMENT WHICH WE CAN USE HERE TO DAMPEN SPECULATION ABOUT
US ROLE. END SUMMARY.

2. FEB 18 PRESS REPORTED THAT NATIONAL PARTY SENATOR
DENNIS WORRALL TOLD DURBAN AUDIENCE PREVIOUS EVENING THAT
US HAD GIVEN "CERTAIN ASSURANCES" TO SOUTH AFRICA IN AUGUST
AND SEPTEMBER, 1975 WHICH LED TO SOUTH AFRICAN INVOLVEMENT
IN ANGOLA. WORRALL, WHO IS NATIONAL PARTY CANDIDATE IN
UPCOMING DURBAN NORTH PARLIAMENTARY BYELECTION, REPORTEDLY
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NAMED US ALONG WITH ZAMBIA, ZAIRE AND IVORY COAST AS

NATIONS WHICH URGED SOUTH AFRICA TO COMMIT TROOPS TO ANGOLA. IN HIS SPEECH WORRALL ALSO REFERRED TO VISITS TO SOUTH AFRICA BY UNITA CHIEF SAVIMBI AND SPOKE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S INVOLVEMENT IN "ANGOLAN CIVIL WAR".

3. SAG OFFICIALS, INCLUDING PRIME MINISTER, HAVE ASSIDUOUSLY DENIED THAT SAG TOOK PART IN ANGOLAN CIVIL WAR, BUT RATHER HAVE ASSERTED THAT SOUTH AFRICAN FORCES WERE COMBATTING MPLA-CUBAN AGGRESSION ULTIMATELY AIMED AT SOUTH AFRICA. WORRALL'S STATEMENT RECEIVED HEAVY PRESS PLAY BECAUSE IT SEEMED TO HAVE REVEALED MORE ABOUT ANGOLA THAN SAG HAD PREVIOUSLY ACKNOWLEDGED AND WAS ALSO FIRST TIME NATIONAL PARTY FIGURE HAS PUBLICLY NAMED U.S. AS NATION WHICH ENCOURAGED SAG TO GET INVOLVED IN ANGOLA. UNITED PARTY AND PROGRESSIVE-REFORM PARTY SPOKESMAN IMMEDIATELY JUMPED ON WORRALL'S REMARKS AS FURTHER EVIDENCE FOR THEIR ARGUMENT THAT GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN WITHHOLDING INFORMATION FROM SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC.

4. ASKED FOR COMMENT ON WORRALL'S REMARKS, FONMIN MULLER TOLD PRESS THAT WORRALL HAD BASED HIS STATEMENT ON NEWS STORIES APPEARING IN PREVIOUS WEEKEND'S PRESS WHICH HAD DETAILED SENATE STAFFER COUGHLIN'S REPORT ON AFRICAN TRIP (CAPE TOWN 162). MULLER STATED THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO COMMENT ON COUGHLIN'S REPORTED STATEMENTS "EXCEPT TO SAY THAT THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT IS IN NO WAY ASSOCIATED WITH THIS REPORT". IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR FEB 18, PRIME MINISTER VORSTER BRIEFLY DISMISSED WORRALL'S COMMENTS AS SIMPLY BASED ON PRESS REPORTS. SIMILAR STATEMENT MADE PUBLICLY BY WORRALL HIMSELF WHO CLAIMS THAT HE HAD MADE THIS CLEAR DURING HIS SPEECH BUT THAT NEWSPAPER ACCOUNTS OF HIS REMARKS HAD OMITTED IT.

5. EMBASSY HAS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED THAT A BASIC ELEMENT OF SAG'S PUBLIC DEFENSE OF ANGOLAN INVOLVEMENT HAS BEEN INSINUATION THAT THE WEST, UNDERSTOOD TO BE THE UNITED STATES, ENCOURAGED SOUTH AFRICA TO BECOME INVOLVED IN THE ANGOLAN FIGHTING AND THEN FAILED TO LIVE UP TO ITS END OF SAME UNDERSTANDING. WE HAVE FOUND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BROAD ACCEPTANCE OF THIS IDEA AMONG WHITE SOUTH AFRICANS INCLUDING EVERY MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT WITH WHOM ISSUE HAS BEEN DISCUSSED. POLITICALLY SENSITIVE BLACKS, THOUGH LESS WILLING TO COMMENT, ALSO ACCEPT IDEA THAT US HAS ACTED IN SOME SHADOWY LIAISON WITH SOUTH AFRICA. BLACK REACTION OF COURSE DIFFERS IN FOCUS FROM THAT OF WHITES, BUT IS NOT LESS CRITICAL. WORRALL'S PUBLIC RECITATION OF DETAILS WHICH SEEM TO HAVE GOTTEN INTO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

THROUGH SENATE AIDE COUGHLIN TENDS TO CONFIRM ALL THESE
SUSPICIONS.

6. ACTION REQUESTED. OUR REITERATION OF SECRETARY AND
ASSISTANT SECRETARY SCHAUFEELE'S STATEMENTS DENYING CONSULTA-
TION WITH SAG IN ITS DECISION TO BECOME INVOLVED IN ANGOLA
HAS NOT BLUNTED THE IMPRESSION OF COLLUSION WHICH IS GAINING
CURRENCY HERE. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO TAKE A
FIRM PUBLIC STANCE DENYING NOT ONLY CONSULTATIONS BUT
THE BROADER IMPLICATIONS OF "ASSURANCES" OR "UNDERSTANDINGS"
ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN GIVEN TO SAG. IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE
TO DO THIS THROUGH A STATEMENT ISSUED IN WASHINGTON WHICH
WE COULD PLAY HERE. WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING THE
DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
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